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Education

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The following is being distributed by the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET):

Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training to Develop a Regional Literacy Action Plan

(Saint John, NB) – A regional action plan to improve literacy skills in Atlantic Canada will be developed, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) announced today at the conclusion of the two-day Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum.

On April 14-15, the Atlantic ministers joined their national colleagues via webcasts to discuss a variety of literacy issues ranging from early childhood literacy, improving reading rates and adult literacy. Saint John was one of the sites across Canada to take part in the interactive event that included leaders representing community-based agencies, university/college academics, field workers, and workplace/workforce literacy specialists.

The innovative forum also included keynote speakers. Among them were Frank McKenna, former Premier of New Brunswick, who discussed the link between literacy and prosperity, and Susan Aglukark, who highlighted how improving their literacy rates can empower Aboriginal Canadians.

The Atlantic ministers used the two-day event to declare their commitment to come together to take a collective stand and provide leadership on improving the region's literacy rates in recognition of the direct link between a highly literate society and economic and social prosperity.

The ministers strongly believe that the events and discussions of the literacy forum will guide the development of both a national action plan on literacy, and their own Atlantic action plan. These plans will complement existing and planned provincial literacy initiatives.

"One of the goals of the literacy forum was to create an environment for literacy experts to meet and discuss issues confronting them," said New Brunswick Education Minister Kelly Lamrock, who is also the current Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. "We can build upon this momentum to develop a national literacy agenda, and a regional literacy action plan that will help strengthen both the region, and the country."

"Although literacy issues vary from province to province, there are many similar problems in each of our four provinces, and an Atlantic strategy can help us in finding solutions to these problems," stated Nova Scotia Education Minister Karen Casey.

"A pan-Canadian forum on literacy provides us with an immediate and diverse library of knowledge that can be applied to individual provinces," added Minister of Education Joan Burke from Newfoundland and Labrador. "We all share similar concerns across Canada and being able to share this knowledge will help us develop new and innovative ideas on literacy."

Gerard Greenan, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for Prince Edward Island stated, "We have gathered knowledge on specific literacy issues and the directives are clear that the Atlantic Provinces need to work together on these issues."

"The forum has been a great success that has allowed Canadians from coast to coast to coast to

network and discuss the important issue of literacy," said Ed Doherty, New Brunswick Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. "We intend to use the results from these discussions and input from stakeholders to develop action plans to address literacy at both the national and regional level."

The Atlantic ministers of education and training commitment to develop a regional literacy action plan came as a result of the January 18, 2008 Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets. At that meeting, Atlantic premiers and their Cabinets adopted a resolution in support of the literacy forum and called on ministers to prepare a joint action plan to improve Atlantic Canada's literacy rates for submission to the Council of Atlantic Premiers by the fall of 2008.

Minister Lamrock, speaking on behalf of his pan-Canadian colleagues, also used the literacy forum to release Learn Canada 2020, a new national learning agenda designed to provide leadership on literacy and other education issues of national importance.

"Literacy is just one of a number of key learning issues we need to address in this country," said Minister Lamrock. "But we tackled it first because it is the foundation of all learning."

Minister Lamrock noted that the national education ministers were already planning their next forum in the hope of engaging aboriginal leaders across Canada in improving aboriginal education nationwide.

CAMET is an agency of the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP) and its purpose is to enhance cooperation in public (Entry-12) and post-secondary education in Atlantic Canada by working together to improve learning, optimize efficiencies and bring added value to provincial initiatives.

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